Docket No.: 826.1658

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

re the Application of:

Isao YAGASAKI et al.

Serial No. 09/749,720   Group Art Unit: 3629

Confirmation No. 6774

Filed: December 28, 2000   Examiner: I. Borissov

For: MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION PROCESSING SYSTEM AND METHOD THEREOF

APPEAL BRIEF

Commissioner for Patents
PO Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

I. Real Party in Interest

The inventors Isao Yagasaki and Toshimitsu Kuroda assigned all rights in the subject application to FUJITSU LIMITED on December 8, 2000 according to the Assignment executed December 8, 2000 and submitted for recordation on April 19, 2001 and recorded at Reel 11787, Frames 698-700. Therefore, the real party in interest is FUJITSU LIMITED.

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

There are no related appeals or interferences known to Appellants, Appellants' legal representatives or the Assignee, FUJITSU LIMITED, which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. Status of Claims

Claims 1-19 are pending in the application and claims 1-19 stand rejected under 35 USC § 103(a).

IV. Status of Amendments

The Amendment filed December 17, 2004 in response to the August 17, 2004 Office Action has been entered according to the March 22, 2005 Office Action. No Amendment was filed in response to the March 22, 2005 Office Action.

V. Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

The present invention is directed to determining membership qualification for a plurality of services by a user who already subscribes to at least one of the services, i.e., is a "member" of a "joined service" (page 8, lines 8-13; Figs. 3A-4). In response to a request from a user, the system displays available service(s) for which the user meets the membership condition(s) (page 34, line 10 to page 40, line 22; Figs 14, 15 and 17), or simulates such requests to generate a list of users that meet membership condition(s) for service(s) to which they do not subscribe (pages 47-50; Figs. 2, 24 and 25). Thus it is possible to determine the number of users who are eligible for unused service(s) (page 49, line 18 to page 50, line 22; Fig. 25).

This is accomplished using a storing device S21 (Fig. 2) that stores membership qualification tables (Fig. 13) for services in a membership qualification system. Each membership qualification table includes qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service (page 35, lines 18-25). Specifically, the qualification criterion information defines a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, and identification information that correlates services with the prescribed service (page 36, lines 1-6).

Upon receipt of information of a user for whom membership qualification is to be performed (e.g., page 17, lines 3-6 or page 18, line 19 to page 19, line 6; Figs. 3B and 4), it is first determined whether the user is utilizing the first service when the user wants to become a member of the second service (page 31, lines 4-16; Fig. 11) and second it is determined that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service (page 31, line 21 to page 32, line 23; Fig. 11).

To determine a number of possible members through simulation, the service tables of the existing services in a membership qualification system are compared with a membership condition (page 47, line 7 to page 48, line 24; Fig. 24). Information about users who are members of an existing service for which a new membership condition satisfies an old

membership condition of the existing service, is added to a member count table (page 48, line 4 to page 49, line 11; Fig. 24). As a result, new member information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition is obtained by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table and displays the result (page 49, lines 18-23; Fig. 24).

VI. Issues to be Reviewed on Appeal

In the final Office Action dated March 22, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 1-19 under 35 USC § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patents 6,332,126 to Peirce et al. and 6,466,918 to Spiegel et al. At issue is (1) whether all of the limitations in the claims have to be given patentable weight, in particular "by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service" (e.g., claim 4, lines 16-17), and (2) whether Peirce et al. and Spiegel et al. teach or suggest all of the limitations recited in the claims that should be given patentable weight.

VII. Argument

Appellants will first address what limitations must be given patentable weight, so that it will be clear what limitations must be found in the prior art. Then the differences between these limitations in the claims and the cited prior art will be discussed

Patentable weight of limitations

In rejecting independent claims 4, 6 and 15, the Examiner asserted that the limitation "by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service" (e.g., claim 4, lines 16-17) is non-functional language and does not have to be given patentable weight, citing In re Danly 263 F.2d 844, 847, 120 USPQ 528-531 (CCPA 1959) and Ex parte Masham, 2 USPQ2d 1647 (Bd Pat. App. & Inter. 1987) (the page numbers of both USPQ citations have been corrected). It is first noted that the quoted limitation does not appear in independent claim 6 even though the limitation is discussed in the rejection of this claim (see, March 22, 2005 Office Action, page 6, lines 8-19).

As discussed in the December 17, 2004 Amendment, both In re Danly and Ex parte Masham involved apparatus claims, while claims 4 and 15 directed to a processing system. It is submitted that In re Danly and Ex parte Masham are not applicable to claims 4 and 15, because a processing system is interpreted differently than an apparatus, based on the holding of In re Lowry, 32 F3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994). In Lowry a claim directed to "a memory for storing data for access by an application program being executed on a data processing

system" was found valid over the prior art, despite the fact that the body of the claim recited the contents of the memory, not its structure. If the cases cited by the Examiner were applicable to data processing systems, the holding of *In re Lowry* would have been that the claim was obvious, since there were no limitations directed to the structure of the memory.

In the last paragraph on page 15 of the March 22, 2005 Office Action, the Examiner argued that the limitation quoted above did not have to be given patentable weight because MPEP § 2106(II)(C) states, "[l]anguage that suggests or makes optional but does not require steps to be performed or does not limit a claim to a particular structure does not limit the scope of a claim or claim limitation." However, the examples in MPEP § 2106(II)(C) of language that should not be given patentable weight are statements of intended use or field of use and clauses beginning with "adapted to," "adapted for," "wherein," or "whereby." Since the above-quoted limitation does not suggest or make optional the operation recited therein or fit any of these examples, it is submitted that MPEP § 2106(II)(C) does not support the Examiner's decision to ignore this limitation.

Since the above-quoted limitation was improperly ignored, the rejections of claims 4 and 15, and claims 1-3, 5 and 14 which depend therefrom, are improper and should be reversed.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the March 22, 2005 Office Action, claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over <u>Peirce et al.</u> in view of <u>Spiegel et al.</u> The teachings of each of these references will be summarized and then some of the patentable distinctions recited in the claims will be noted.

Peirce et al.

As discussed in the Amendments received by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on September 3, 2003 and March 22, 2004, <u>Peirce et al.</u> is directed to a system for generating targeted advertisements to consumers based on their past purchase history. While "issuers" are given control over whether groups of cardholders receive offers, no suggestion has been found that the cardholders themselves have any control over whether offers are sent to them. Specifically, <u>Peirce et al.</u> discloses a targeted payment system discount program which uses information from consumer payment system institutions to match qualified consumers to targeted merchant discount offers based on the purchase history of the consumers. The system is designed for use by many merchants and many issuers of credit cards to target a cardholder population. To participate, "merchants must satisfy the Merchant Qualification Criteria" (column

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5, lines 47-48) and card holders are targeted based on characteristics defined by merchants or "Dealmakers" (e.g., column 6, line 5). The results of such targeting are reported to the dealmaker or merchant on a "Query Status Screen" (column 6, line 54). Issuers of credit cards control whether their card holders receive offers generated by merchants or dealmakers "by providing merchant exclusion and prioritization perimeters for each Card Group" (column 9, lines 17-19). As illustrated in Figs. 1 and 1.5, determining whether cardholders qualify requires detailed examination of purchase history records that are generated as described at column 9, line 48 to column 10, line 42. The system may be used to notify a consumer of currently discounted goods that are similar or related to goods that the consumer has purchased in the past.

Spiegel et al.

As discussed in the December 17, 2004 Amendment, Spiegel et al. is directed to a system for "exposing" popular nodes within a browse tree, by scoring the popularity of information of one category based on activity data of a community, to a user who is a member of the community and uses information in the category. Membership in the community may be defined by users who explicitly join the community, or whose membership "is based on information known about the user, such as the user's e-mail domain, Internet service provider, purchase history, or shipping address" (column 2, lines 65-67).

Distinctions over cited art

Nothing has been cited or found in Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. regarding "qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service" (claim 4, lines 4-6). The cited portion of Spiegel et al. simply lists types of information that may be included in defining a group of users to whom information should be presented. As noted above, Peirce et al. only discloses that merchants must satisfy a merchant qualification criterion, while cardholders are targeted based on characteristics defined by merchants or "dealmakers" and whether cardholders receive offers generated by merchants or dealmakers is controlled by issuers of credit cards. Thus, no suggestion has been found in Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. of determining qualification for a "second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service" (e.g., claim 4, last three lines).

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In the second paragraph of the Response to Arguments in the middle of page 15, the Examiner cited the teaching in Peirce et al. that merchants may "target cardholders based on travel data, i.e., the number of trips to a particular destination airport per quarter" (column 6, lines 30-32) or based "on their response rate to prior Program offers, specifically the number of responses to offers by quarter" (column 6, lines 34-35), as disclosing "qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service" (e.g., claim 4, lines 4-6). The March 22, 2005 Office Action did not provide any explanation of how the cited portions of Peirce et al. come close to even suggesting this limitation. There does not appear to be any relationship between "number of trips" or responding to offers and "a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member" as recited in claim 4. Since claims 9, 12, 15 and 18 recite limitations similar to that quoted from claim 4 previously in this paragraph, the rejection of claims 4, 9, 12, 15 and 18, as well as claims 1-3, 5, 8, 11, 14 and 17 which depend therefrom, should be reversed.

The language used in the paragraph on page 3 of the March 22, 2004 Office Action starting with "Claim 4" may or may not be an accurate description of what is taught by Peirce et al., but it is not a description of what is recited in claim 4. The differences between the claims and the teachings of Peirce et al. were described in Amendment received by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on March 22, 2004 and entered by the Request for Continued Examination filed May 18, 2004. By failing to even reference the language recited in the claims, The March 22, 2004 Office Action, like the August 17, 2004 Office Action, fails to rebut the arguments made in the March 22, 2004 Amendment. It is submitted that using Spiegel et al. instead of Yoshioka et al. as a secondary reference does not overcome the deficiencies of Peirce et al. described in the March 22, 2004 Amendment.

For the above reasons, it is submitted that claim 4 and claims 1-3 and 5 which depend therefrom patentably distinguish over Peirce et al. in view of Spiegel et al. Since similar limitations are recited in claims 9, 12, 15 and 18, it is submitted that claims 9, 12, 15 and 18 and 8, 11, 14 and 17 which depend therefrom patentably distinguish over Peirce et al. in view of Spiegel et al.

Furthermore, the rejections of claims 9, 12 and 18 on pages 7, 9 and 11-14 refer to operations or functions that are not recited in these claims and fail to describe where either Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. disclose limitations that are recited in these claims. For example, in rejecting claim 9, there is discussion of two operations involving "historic purchase activity"

(March 22, 2005 Office Action, page 7, lines 12 and 15) and "presenting qualification information about said selected service to the user" which are not recited in claim 9, while there was no explanation in the March 22, 2005 Office Action of where Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. disclose the final operation recited in claim 9:

> determining that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service

(claim 9, last 4 lines). It is noted that the limitation ignored by the Examiner in claims 4 and 15 is part of this operation. However, claim 9 is directed to a method of controlling a computer using a program stored on a computer readable recording medium, claim 12 is directed to a method and claim 18 is directed to a method of controlling a computer using a program stored on a computer accessible transfer medium; therefore, In re Danly and Ex parte Masham do not apply to claims 9, 12 and 18.

In addition, it is submitted that MPEP § 2106(II)(C) does not apply to claims 9, 12 and 18, because there are no statements of intended use or field of use, or clauses beginning with "adapted to," "adapted for," "wherein," or "whereby." For the above reasons, it is submitted that the March 22, 2005 Office Action did not make a prima facie case of obviousness of claims 9, 12 and 18 or claims 8, 11 and 17 which depend therefrom.

With respect to the independent claims 6, 10, 13, 16 and 19, the language used in describing what is taught by Peirce et al. and Spiegel et al. does not make a prima facie case of obviousness. Specifically, nothing was cited in either Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. regarding the "simulating device" recited at lines 6-12 of claim 6. Instead, the paragraph beginning with "Claim 6" on page 5 of the March 22, 2005 Office Action referred to "a monitoring device for monitoring qualifying information of users; a determining device for determining users eligible for the specified target criteria ...; and ... [a] presenting device for presenting information about a specified service to the user" (March 22, 2005 Office Action, page 5, lines 17-20). These devices are not recited in claim 6, nor are the operations they perform recited in claim 6. On the other hand, the operations recited as being performed by the simulating device are not discussed in the March 22, 2005 Office Action.

Claim 16 recites "simulating means" (claim 16, line 6) that performs functions similar to the operations recited as being performed by the simulating device recited in claim 6. Even if the holdings of In re Danly and Ex parte Masham apply to the simulating device recited in claim

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6, as discussed above with respect to claim 15, they do not apply to functions performed by means-plus-function elements. Therefore, claim 16 was improperly rejected and the rejection should be reversed.

In the first paragraph on page 16 in the Response to Arguments section of the March 22, 2005 Office Action, the Examiner responded to the argument that Peirce et al. and Spiegel et al. do not teach or suggest a simulating device or means as recited in claims 6 and 16 by asserting that Peirce et al. "discloses a monitoring device for monitoring qualifying information of users, and a determining device for determining users eligible for the specified target criteria" at column 3, lines 10-15, "which provide same functionality as a simulating device." However, the operations performed by these devices do not match the operations recited as being performed by the simulating device recited in claim 6 or the functions performed by the simulating means recited in claim 16. The rejection of these claims does not describe where Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. disclose these operations and functions. Therefore, it is submitted that the rejections of claims 6 and 16 are improper and should be reversed.

Similarly, the operations of "comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services in a membership qualification system with the new membership condition" (claim 10, lines 6-7), "adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service" (claim 10, lines 8-10) and "obtaining new member information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table" (claim 10, lines 11-13) and similar limitations recited in claims 13 and 19 were not discussed in the rejection of these claims in the May 22, 2005 Office Action. These limitations were apparently ignored without even citing any authority for doing so or providing any explanation, even in the Response to Arguments, of where there operations are disclosed by Peirce et al. or Spiegel et al. Therefore, these rejections should be reversed for failure to make a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Summary of arguments

For the reasons set forth above and in the Amendments filed December 17, 2004 and previously during prosecution of this application, it is submitted that claims 1-19 patentably distinguish over Peirce et al. and Spiegel et al. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's final rejection of the claims is without support and, therefore, erroneous.

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Accordingly, the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences is respectfully urged to so find and to reverse the Examiner's final rejection.

Please charge the required fee of $500.00 to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935. If any additional fees are required, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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VIII. Claims Appendix

1. The processing system as set forth in claim 4,

wherein said storing device stores a plurality of service tables of the services, each of which includes a membership condition of a corresponding service,

wherein said receiving device receives from the user a request to present an available membership service for the user, and

wherein said processing system further comprises:

a selecting device extracting, from among the plurality of service tables, a first membership condition from a service table of a current service of which the user has become a member, and a second membership condition from at least one service table of at least one other service of which the user has not become a member in response to the request, comparing the first and second membership conditions, and selecting an eligible service of which the user can become a member; and

a presenting device presenting information to the user about the eligible service of which the user can become a member.

2. The processing system as set forth in claim 1, wherein when the user is a member of at least two services, said selecting device totals membership conditions of the at least two services using an AND operation and compares a totaled membership condition with the second membership condition of the service of which the user has not become a member.

3. The processing system as set forth in claim 2,

further comprising a registering device registering common certificate information that is in common with the at least two services, wherein said receiving device receives certificate information of the user, and

wherein, when the certificate information of the user corresponds to the common certificate information, said selecting device obtains the membership conditions of the at least two services based on the certificate information of the user.

4. A processing system, comprising:

a storing device storing a plurality of membership qualification tables of a plurality of services in a membership qualification system, each of the plurality of membership qualification tables including qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a

corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, and identification information of a first service of the plurality of services being included by qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a second service of the plurality of services for indicating the prescribed service;

a receiving device receiving information of a user for whom membership qualification is performed;

a first determining device determining, in response to the information of the user, whether the user is utilizing the first service when the user wants to become a member of the second service; and

a second determining device determining that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service.

5. The processing system as set forth in claim 4,

further comprising a registering device registering certificate information for a service that the user is utilizing,

wherein said receiving device receives identification information of the certificate information of the user, and

wherein when the identification information corresponds to the registered certificate information, said first determining device obtains information about the service that the user is utilizing based on the identification information and determines whether or not the user is utilizing the first service.

6. A processing system, comprising:

a storing device storing a plurality of service tables of a plurality of existing services in a membership qualification system, each of the plurality of service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service of the plurality of existing services;

a designating device designating a new membership condition;

a simulating device comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services with the new membership condition, adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service, and obtaining new member

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information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table; and

an output device outputting the new member information.

7. The processing system as set forth in claim 6,

further comprising a registering device registering a plurality of pieces of certificate information of the plurality of users who are utilizing the existing services,

wherein said simulating device adds certificate information of the users who are the members of the existing service to the member count table when the new membership condition satisfies the old membership condition of the existing service, counts a number of the pieces of certificate information contained in the member count table, and obtains the number of users who can become the members of the other service corresponding to the new membership condition.

8. A computer-readable recording medium as set forth in claim 9,

wherein by said receiving the computer receives from the user a request to present an available membership service for the user, and

wherein said method further comprises:

extracting, in response to the request, from among a plurality of service tables of the services, each of which includes a first membership condition of a current service of which the user has become a member, and a second membership condition from at least one service table of at least one other service of which the user has not become a member;

comparing the first and second membership conditions;

selecting an eligible service of which the user can become a member; and

presenting information to the user about the eligible service of which the user can become a member.

9. A computer-readable recording medium on which a program for a computer is recorded, said program causing the computer to perform a method comprising:

receiving information of a user for whom membership qualification is performed;

determining whether the user is utilizing a first service in a membership qualification system using membership qualification tables of services, each of the membership qualification tables including qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a

corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, when the user wants to become a member of a second service in the membership qualification system based on the identification information of the first service included in the qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of the second service; and

determining that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service.

10. A computer-readable recording medium on which at least one program for a computer is recorded, said at least one program causing the computer to perform:

storing service tables of existing services, each of the service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service of the existing services;

designating a new membership condition;

comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services in a membership qualification system with the new membership condition;

adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service;

obtaining new member information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table; and

outputting the new member information.

11. The processing method as set forth in claim 12,

wherein said storing includes storing a plurality of service tables of the services, each of the service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service,

wherein said receiving includes receiving from the user a request to present an available membership service for the user,

wherein said processing method further comprises:

extracting, in response to the request, from among the plurality of service tables, a first membership condition from a service table of a current service of which the user

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has become a member and a second membership condition from at least one service table of at least one other service of which the user has not become a member;

comparing the first and second membership conditions; and

selecting an eligible service of which the user can become a member, and

wherein said displaying includes displaying information about the eligible service of which the user can become a member on the screen.

12. A processing method, comprising:

referencing the qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a first service in a membership qualification system using membership qualification tables of services, each of the membership qualification tables including qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, when a user wants to become a member of the first service;

receiving information of a user for whom membership qualification is performed;

determining, in response to the information of the user, whether the user is utilizing a second service in the membership qualification system based on the identification information of the second service included in the qualification criterion information;

determining that the user has a membership qualification for the first service by referring to the membership qualification table of the first service and checking that the identification information of the second service is included in the qualification criterion information of the first service when the user is utilizing the second service; and

displaying a qualification result on a screen.

13. A processing method for simulating relation between a membership condition for a service and a number of users, comprising:

storing service tables of existing services, each of the service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service of the existing services;

designating a new membership condition;

comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services in a membership qualification system with the new membership condition;

adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service;

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obtaining new member information of a number of users that can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table; and

displaying the new member information on a screen.

14. The processing system as set forth in claim 15,

wherein said storing means stores a plurality of service tables of the services, each of which includes a membership condition of a corresponding service,

wherein said receiving means receives from the user a request to present an available membership service for the user, and

wherein said processing system further comprises:

selecting means for extracting, from among the plurality of service tables, a first membership condition from a service table of a current service of which the user has become a member and a second membership condition from at least one service table of at least one other service of which the user has not become a member in response to the request, comparing the first and second membership conditions, and selecting an eligible service of which the user can become a member; and

presenting means for presenting information to the user about the eligible service of which the user can become a member.

15. A processing system, comprising:

storing means for storing membership qualification tables of services in a membership qualification system, each of the membership qualification tables including qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, and identification information of a first service included in the qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a second service for indicating the prescribed service;

a receiving device receiving information of a user for whom membership qualification is performed;

first determining means for determining, in response to the information of the user, whether the user is utilizing the first service when the user wants to become a member of the second service; and

second determining means for determining that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service.

16. A processing system, comprising:

storing means for storing service tables of a existing services in a membership qualification system, each of the service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service of the existing services;

designating means for designating a new membership condition;

simulating means for comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services with the new membership condition, adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service, and obtaining new member information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table; and

output means for outputting the new member information.

17. The computer accessible transfer medium as set forth in claim 18, said program further causing the computer to perform:

extracting, from a plurality of service tables of the services, a first membership condition from a service table of a current service in a membership qualification system of which a user has become a member and a second membership condition from at least one service table of at least one other service in the membership qualification system of which the user has not become a member in response to the request;

comparing the first and second membership conditions;

selecting an eligible service of which the user can become a member; and

presenting information to the user about the eligible service of which the user can become a member.

18. A computer accessible transfer medium supplying a program to a computer, said program causing the computer to perform:

receiving information of a user for whom membership qualification is performed;

determining, in response to the information of the user, whether the user is utilizing a first service in a membership qualification system using membership qualification tables of services, each of the membership qualification tables including qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of a corresponding service and defining a prescribed service of which a user ought to be a member to have a membership qualification for the corresponding service, when the user wants to become a member of a second service in the membership qualification system based on identification information of the first service included in qualification criterion information for qualifying membership of the second service; and

determining that the user has a membership qualification for the second service by referring to the membership qualification table of the second service and checking that the identification information of the first service is included in the qualification criterion information of the second service when the user is utilizing the first service.

19. A computer accessible transfer medium supplying a program to a computer, said program causing the computer to perform:

storing service tables of existing services, each of the service tables including a membership condition of a corresponding service of the existing services;

designating a new membership condition;

comparing each membership condition of the service tables of the existing services in a membership qualification system with the new membership condition;

adding information of users who are members of an existing service to a member count table when the new membership condition satisfies an old membership condition of the existing service;

obtaining new member information about a number of users who can become members of another service corresponding to the new membership condition by counting a number of pieces of information contained in the member count table; and

outputting the new member information

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